RB 75936

Library
of the
University of Toronto

1258

THE

CRUEL HUSBAND;

OR,

DEVONSHIRE TRAGEDY

wherein is related the account of

Mr. J. Barton, of Topsham;

Who was put apprentice to Mr. Long, Merchant, in Exeter, and afterwards married his master's maid servant privately; but being threatened to be disinherited by his father for the same, was instigated by the devil to murder her which shocking act he committed.

ALSO, A

REMARKABLE DREAM

Of the landlady where they lodged, discovering where the body of his wife was concealed; and his extraordinary penitence and execution

John Evans, Printer, 42, Long-lane, London.

THE CRUEL HUSBAND;

OR,

DEVONSHIRE TRAGEDY

THE

CRUEL HUSBAND;

OR,

DEVONSHIRE TRAGEDY.

IN the town of Topſham, four miles from the city of Exeter, in the ſaid county, lived one Mr. John Barton, a gentleman of a conſiderable fortune; and he had two children, viz. a ſon and a daughter on whom he beſtowed a ſuitable education as became their birth. When his ſon was of proper age he put him apprentice to one Mr. Long, a wine merchant in the city of Exeter, with whom he ſerved out his apprenticeſhip faithfully and honeſtly, to the ſatisfaction of his maſter and parents. However, that he might have a further improvement in his buſineſs, it was on all hands agreed that he ſhould ſerve his maſter as clerk. During which time he fell in love with his miſtreſs's waiting-maid, and married her privately, without either the knowledge of his parents or maſter. Soon after this ſhe pro ed with child, and immediately told her huſband of it who immediately

provided her with a lodging a few miles from Exeter that it might be kept a ſecret from all his friends, particularly from his father. But as bad flies ſwifter than good news, this ſoon reached his father; for ſome perſons having mentioned to his father the habits of intimacy they had been in for ſome time, (though they could not poſitively ſay they were married) he being naturally led into an apprehenſion of their being married, in a ſhort time ſent for his ſon home and taxed him about it; but he poſitively denied it, his father told him that if he had demeaned himſelf ſo much as to marry a humble ſervant, he would totally diſinherit him. He knowing his father to be a reſolute man, and punctual to his word, thought it impoſſible ever to reconcile him to the match, at which the young man began to conſider what courſe to take that he might not incur his father's diſpleaſure, and by that means be diſinherited from a good and extenſive eſtate that he was ſole heir to.

He took leave of his father and rode to Exeter, and as he rode along his whole thoughts were how and which way he ſhould extricate himſelf from his preſent trouble; one thought following another ſo confuſed him that he could not come to any determination. But Satan, that great deceiver of mankind, who is always ready to take advantage of weak mortals when in diſtreſs, infuſed into him the horrid idea of murdering his innocent wife; which wicked deſign he was reſolutely bent to perform, and accordingly he perpetrated his deviliſh deſign in the following manner:

The day after his arrival at Exeter he wrote a letter to his wife deſiring her to meet him at a certain place on the road ſide, telling her he would paſs that way on ſome [illegible] for his maſter, and that he ſhould be glad to [illegible]

er, to acquaint her of his father's goodneſs to him in eing reconciled to the choice he had made. She received this letter while at breakfaſt with her landlady; ſhe related to her landlady a horrid dream ſhe had the preceding night, which was, that as ſhe was ſitting on the ground a ſerpent came and bit her by the left breaſt, and ſhe ſeemed concerned at it, but the joy of receiving the letter put it out of her mind, and when ſhe read the letter ſhe ſhewed it her landlady being proud of his writing ſo lovingly.

The poor harmleſs creature and her landlady having finiſhed their breakfaſt, ſhe got every thing ready to follow her huſband's directions, and haſtily went (not harbouring the leaſt thought of his wicked deſign) to the place appointed, where ſhe found him according to promiſe in the letter. He aroſe and ſeemed lovingly to meet

After having walked and talked together ſome time, they arrived at the fatal place. In ſhort he told her that his reſolution was there to murder her. Upon hearing of which her countenance immediately changed, and falling on her knees with floods of tears running from her eyes, ſhe begged for God's ſake, and for the ſake of the innocent babe in her womb, to ſpare the life of her that ſolemnly loved him, and him only, and always far from doing him the leaſt injury; adding, that, though it would be a heart breaking to her, ſhe would retire to ſome remote corner of the world, where ſhe would hide herſelf from him and the world for ever, and there rear and bring up the innocent offſpring of their loves. But he not regarding her piteous moans and prayers to ſave her life, which was enough to ſoften the hard heart of a ſavage, far leſs his, but all had no effect, he villainouſly

knocked her down with a cane he had in his hand, and then cut her throat from ear to ear, almoſt ſevering her head from her body, and afterwards dragged her to a pit that was hard by, into which he put her, covering her with ſtones and earth, after which he returned home.

Next day he ſent to her landlady for her things, and to pay what money was due for her board and lodging, and informed her that his father was reconciled to them, and that he had ſent her to his father's, there to remain till an opportunity offered to ſet himſelf up in buſineſs, and provide every thing neceſſary for houſe keeping.

In the courſe of the day the landlady carried the things he wiſhed for to him, and received the money due to her for board and lodging, and returned home. Bed time arriving, the landlady and her huſband repaired to take their night's reſt, but ſhe was ſo much troubled, during the whole night, with the moſt horrid dreams; ſhe was at ſeveral times awakened from her ſleep by the moſt frightful viſions and ſpectres breaking in upon her reſt, from which, when in the morning ſhe began to reflect on what had paſſed the preceding night, ſhe concluded all muſt not be well with Mrs. Barton upon which, while at breakfaſt ſhe related to her huſband the various dreams ſhe had that night and the apprehenſions ſhe lay under; ſhe dreamed ſhe ſaw Mrs. Barton all over blood, from which ſhe was ſure ſome uncommon accident had happened to her, but her huſband would not harbour the leaſt thought of Mr. Barton's hurting his wife in any degree whatever, being always ſo fond of her, at leaſt to outward appearance; there was no doubt of his love to her in the eyes of all that knew him; but by the cruel and unrelenting hand of his father, and liſtening too much to that evil deceiver of mankind, Satan,

all love was eraſed from his breaſt, and this moſt horrid and bloody thought ſucceeded.

We here meet with one of the many inſtances that daily occur of parents beſtowing a great and expenſive education on their children, and bind their young and unexperienced minds to the ſelfiſh wiſhes of their old and more experienced parents, when it ought to be the ſtudy of all parents to promote the welfare of their offſpring, and not ſpurn them from their parental protection, on account of one ſlip of youth.

For a night or two however, this paſſed on, but ſtill the landlady could not ſleep, upon which ſhe acquainted ſeveral of her neighbours with her uneaſineſs, and formed the reſolution of going to enquire after Mrs. Barton; but they aſked how ſhe would know where to find her, ſhe told them that when Mrs. Barton went to meet her huſband, ſhe forgot the letter ſhe had from her huſband, appointing her to meet him at a certain place, by which ſhe could at leaſt trace them out ſo far.

She, her huſband and ſeveral of her neighbours went accordingly to the place which was about two miles from where they lived, and looked about for ſome time but could ſee nothing; at laſt going to the aforeſaid pit, and looking about with care they found a ſtick the head of which was bloody, which cauſed a ſuſpicion that ſhe was murdered there, and after ſome time they found the body, after removing the ſtones and earth in the pit, cut and mangled in a moſt barbarous manner, from which they concluded he muſt be the murderer, and went directly to Exeter to Merchant Long's and enquired if Mr. Barton was within—the ſervant anſwered yes, that he was in his maſter's counting rooms

THE landlady desired to speak with him, for his wife ha forgot some things in her room, which she did not se till that morning and had brought them with her. He accordingly appeared—they shewed him the stick which

proved to be his master's—he confessed the murder of his wife, and the reason why he did it; and said that he would willingly embrace death, for he should have no enjoyment this side the grave, and hoped that his life would make atonement for her's. For he said t at he found the terrible effects of a guilty conscience, thinking daily and hourly that he heard her blood cry out for vengeance, and that he thought he saw her always in his sight. Also, he said that he had been at Topsham quay three times to tak shipping, but had no power to go on board. All which he confessed before Justice Hall, and was committed to

goal; and at the next assizes he took his trial, when he had nothing to say in his defence, and was accordingly condemned.

While under sentence of death he behaved in an extraordinary and penitent manner, as behoveth every one in his unhappy circumstances.

He was brought out of the gaol in his shroud with a prayer book in his hand. Being brought to the place where he committed the murder, and after prayers, as is usual, he gave the signal for the executioner to do his office, and calling upon the Lord to receive his poor immortal soul, he was launched into eternity.

The text of an excellent sermon very suitable to the foregoing, from James i. 13, 14, 15.

Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust is conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

FINIS.

John Evans, Printer, Long-Lane, London.